



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

MORE THAN \$90 MILLION WORTH OF COCAINE SEIZED IN MIAMI

-ICE arrests four Colombian nationals alleged in the drug conspiracy--

MIAMI- R. Alexander Acosta, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Rear Admiral D. Brian Peterman, Commander 7th Coast Guard District, Jesus Torres, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Jonathan I. Solomon, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Mark R. Trouville, Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration, announced today that defendants, Abel Pardo Salgado, Alberto Cortes, Dionisio Velez Tarquino, and Carlos Arturo Moreno, were charged by criminal complaint with possession and conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute five or more kilograms of cocaine, in violation of Title 46, United States Code Appendix, Section 1903(a) and (j). If convicted on these charges, the defendants face a mandatory minimum sentence of ten (10) years' imprisonment and a maximum of life.

On February 8, 2006, officers of a U. S. Coast Guard law enforcement detachment on board the U.S.S. Ford stopped and boarded the fishing vessel VICTORIA, in international waters, approximately 40 nautical miles north of Panama. During a search of the fishing vessel, the officers discovered approximately 1001 kilograms of cocaine (one ton). All four crewmembers on the vessel were arrested.

According to the complaint affidavit filed in this case, the Coast Guard found the cocaine in a hidden compartment on board the VICTORIA. The access to the hidden compartment was located in the pilothouse of the vessel. The area appeared to be recently painted. The complaint also alleges that the crew of the VICTORIA attempted to sink the vessel by allowing seawater into the engine room. In addition, the VICTORIA attempted to ram the U.S.S. Ford before being stopped.

United States Attorney Acosta stated, "The best way to fight drugs is to stop them from ever reaching our shores in the first place. In this case, the Coast Guard effectively stopped more than two thousand pounds of cocaine from infecting our streets. Today's seizure and arrests were the result of a newly formed maritime working group that includes the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida."

"Coast Guard partnership with the Department of Defense and the U.S. Navy continues to be critical to the success of drug interdiction operations in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific," said Adm. D. Brian Peterman, Commander of the Seventh Coast Guard District.

"Global criminal organizations that flood American streets with deadly contraband, that spread violence in our neighborhoods, and that exploit U.S. financial systems to cleanse their dirty money, pose a direct threat to the homeland security of the United States," said Jesus Torres, ICE Special Agent in Charge in Miami. "We will continue working closely with our law enforcement partners in our efforts to dismantle them."

Mr. Acosta commended the investigative efforts of the United States Coast Guard, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), FBI, and DEA for their work on this case. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Karen Gilbert and Special Assistant United States Attorney Jaime Raich.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.